

CCC INTERVIEW WITH DOT CARTER

Date: February 12, 2002

Location: Cedar Rapids

Interviewer: Bill Bird

DNR: Where is your hometown?

Dot: Floris, Iowa.

DNR: What age were you when you enrolled?

Dot: I was one of the older ones, 22 or 23.

DNR: What did you do before you went into the CCC camp?

Dot: I stayed home on the farm, and worked in the hay fields for \$1.00 a day.

DNR: Why did you join the CCC's?

Dot: I was working for a neighbor, and he was a member of the board at Bloomfield, and he took me over there. I was sitting on the court house steps and he came and ask me if I would be interested in joining the CCC's, and he thought he could get me in. That was in November.

DNR: What camp were you assigned too?

Dot: 773. State Park 14 at Lake Wapello. I stayed the whole time and was not transferred.

DNR: What were the dates you worked there?

Dot: January 2, 1935 to October 30, 1937. 33 months

DNR: Tell me about the first day at camp?

Dot: The first day of camp, we went in, 15 or 20 of us at the same time. They examined us and swore us in, then took us down to the supply room. They issued our clothes to us. Everything. Assigned us a barracks. Gave us a barracks bag to put our stuff in. They were wood barracks. There were five of them. They put me in section 3 with double bunk beds. There were 50 to 60 men in a barracks.

DNR: What personal items were you allowed to take into the camp?

Dot: Just my clothes I had on. About all. The rest they give you. They give you razors in a box. We didn't have a footlocker or anything just the barracks bag. They gave a cot and blankets, everything.

DNR: Do you remember any of your bunkmates?

Dot: Yes. Jackson. He was the section leader at the time. We had different leaders as time went on.

DNR: How did you get along with the guys?

Dot: Good. Pretty good. They were pretty helpful.

DNR: What was the food like?

Dot: Pretty good. I never found fault with the food. I always got enough to eat. Some hollered about it. We'd have milk, banana or orange, eggs, coffee sometimes for breakfast. Sometimes hamburger and gravy on toast. Was easy for them to make. Lunchtime, chili, beef stew, on Fridays, fish. Supper, we'd have meat, potatoes & gravy. We had meat at all the meals, one way or the other. Food wasn't bad considering.

DNR: Who did the cooking?

Dot: CCC boys, there were no women in camp.

DNR: Did you have special holiday meals?

Dot: Yes. They fed us pretty good. The last year there, we had a baker that made pies. In the morning we would have rolls.

DNR: When was payday?

Dot: At the end of the month. When I first went there, \$25 went home and we go canteen books worth \$5.

DNR: What is a canteen book?

Dot: It was worth a dollar. You could buy candy bars, razor blades and toothpaste.

DNR: Did you have any days off?

Dot: Usually didn't work on Saturday and Sunday.

DNR: How was the Sabbath observed?

Dot: They had a chaplain come around. They had different denominations. Quite a few went to the services down at the mess hall.

DNR: Can you tell me about the sport's activities that took place?

Dot: Well, we played baseball mostly, that was the only thing. We also did a lot of swimming in the lake.

DNR: Did you have any personal conflicts in the camp?

Dot: I just tried to get along.

DNR: If they didn't get along what would happen?

Dot: The army officers, a captain, lieutenant would take care of it. We were under army rules and regulations.

DNR: What kind of discipline did they use?

Dot: They would discharge them.

DNR: If it were more of a minor thing, what would do they do to you?

Dot: Extra KP, scrub the office.

DNR: Were there any educational or vocational opportunities?

Dot: Yes. But I didn't take any. I went to business school before. In Chillicothe, Missouri.

DNR: What were some of the projects you were involved with at the camp?

Dot: Tree planting, a lot of trees. Put in settling beds at bottom of first hill, out to the left. We hauled a lot of rock. We set a lot of guard rails. They overlook the parking areas. Also, laid a little rock at the boat house. For the first three or four months I was there.

DNR: Who trained you?

Dot: We had two engineers. Kerner and Zimmer. Then foreman, helped. They were our boss.

DNR: Did you have other leaders and do you know their names?

Dot: Yes. Benjamin Freed, Paul Wise,.

DNR: Did you get along with them okay?

Dot: Oh yeah. I didn't have any problems with them.

DNR: How did you get your work assignments?

Dot: We would line up and then they would organize us by the job. We were assigned by the engineers and the assistant superintendent.

DNR: What different types of equipment did you use?

Dot: Axes, shovels, spades, picks. All hand tools. We didn't have power saws.

DNR: How long was your work day?

Dot: From 8 o'clock in the morning until 4:00 p.m. in the evening.

DNR: Do you remember the names of any of your co-workers?

Dot: Yes. Francis Bogert, Gerald Lunsford, Dale Stufflebeam, Ed Cummings, Harold Swaim.

DNR: Have you had contact with any of them since you left the camp?

Dot: Yes. I visited with them. They all done well when they left. I kept in contact with them. Jim Yates, he was the Sheriff in Davis County.

DNR: Did the city kids get along with the country kids?

Dot: Yes.

DNR: Did the city kids work as well as the country kids?

Dot: No.

DNR: Were there any minorities in the camp?

Dot: No.

DNR: What specific skills did you learn at the camp?

Dot: I had all the schooling. They needed a clerk in the state office. I got that job. I got a raise out of it. I got a \$15 raise.

DNR: What were some of the things you did as a clerk?

Dot: Type purchase orders & letters for the superintendant.

DNR: How do you think any of that benefited you after camp?

Dot: I worked as a checker at Morrell's for about 36 years. It helped out, no doubt.

DNR: Did you have any injuries in camp?

Dot: No.

DNR: If anybody was injured, was there a hospital there?

Dot: Yes, we had a little hospital with a few beds in it and an orderly in it all the time. We also had an ambulance. I think it was based in Ottumwa at the time.

DNR: Did you recall any diseases at camp?

Dot: Mumps and measles. A lot of them.

DNR: Did you have rodent and insect problems?

Dot: Yes. Bed bugs.

DNR: How did you take care of the problem?

Dot: Smoke, sulfur. Tear up your bed, close all the doors and you couldn't see inside.

DNR: Did you do any work for the community?

Dot: No.

DNR: Did you have any contact with the outside community?

Dot: Yes. Went to town

DNR: What did you do when you went into town?

Dot: Oh just odds and ends.

DNR: Were there any Masonic organizations?

Dot: No.

DNR: Did you have any contact with females?

Dot: I met my wife while out there. On a blind date. Just laying around. Doing nothing. A friend took me down to her place.

DNR: No females allowed at the camp?

Dot: Yeah. A few came down to the beach.

DNR: Did the local boys get jealous of the CCC boys?

Dot: Not as far as I know. The neighbors were all friendly.

DNR: How were the CCC boys looked at by the town?

Dot: I don't know. Kind of a question, we were on welfare.

DNR: What was your most memorable experience?

Dot: Don't have one.

DNR: What was your biggest accomplishment at the camp?

Dot: Well, building a boat house, dining hall and the beach. Building a lot of cabins. Planted thousands of trees. We also built the dirt roads.

DNR: How do you think your life changed by enrolling in the camp?

Dot: Got to save a little money, not much, and enjoyed myself out there. It was a good deal.

DNR: Where did you go after the CCC camp?

Dot: I went home for a few days, then went to Ottumwa and worked for a few weeks at a wholesale house, then worked at John Morrell's for 36 years. They just gave me a good start.

DNR: Is there anything else you want to say about the camp?

Dot: I made a lot of friends out there. When they throw you in with 300 strangers you better learn to get along. Some went AWOL and never came back, they never tried to go get them. Went to Fort Des Moines to get supply's, and sometimes they had to drag us back in with a caterpillar in the mud. I ran the canteen for a time and got an extra \$10.00 for that. I got to keep the extra money, \$25.00 was sent home each month. I didn't put in for the office job, I was just setting down at the recreation room and slid over under a typewriter and typed out about 60 words a minute. A guy from the office saw me. They had a clerk but he was poor. The next morning they called me in. I typed all the purchase orders, kept track of the gasoline, tools and equipment. I also had letter writing skills that came in handy. There was one guy who got kicked out for stealing sheep.